

REMARKS

Claims 1-10 are pending in this application. Claims 1-5, 7 and 9-10 are amended, and claims 11-13 are added herein.

Claims 1, 5 and 11 are independent.

The title is objected to. The title is amended to address the noted concern. Accordingly it is respectfully requested that the objection be reconsidered and withdrawn.

Claims 1-4 stand provisionally rejected for obvious type double patenting over claims 13-16 of co-pending Application 10/697,256. The means recitals included in originally filed claim 1 and which the Official Action indicates to be the basis for the double patenting rejection, have been deleted in amended claim 1 presented herein. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the provisional double patenting rejection be reconsidered and withdrawn.

Claims 1-4 stand rejected under 35 USC §102(b), as anticipated by Nishikawa (JP 2000-300729). Claims 5-10 stand rejected under 35 USC §103(a), as obvious over Nishikawa (JP 2000-300729).

As amended herein, independent claim 1 requires, inter alia:

shielding control device for controlling the shielding device under control of the CPU to be in either a state that a player can see the symbols or a state that the player cannot see the symbols so that a stopping order is indicated, by controlling the shielding device such that (i) a display area of a reel that is to be stopped is in the state that the player can see the symbols on the reel and (ii) display areas of other reels that are not to be stopped are in the state that a player can see the symbols on those reels.

As amended herein, independent claim 5 requires, inter alia, that:

the shutter is controlled such that the portion of the symbols is shielded or shown through the panel so that a stopping order is indicated by controlling the shutter such that a display area of a reel having the portion of symbols (i) is not shielded if that reel is to be stopped and (ii) is shielded if that reel is not to be stopped.

New independent claim 11 requires, inter alia, that:

prior to the player directing the stopping of the varying symbols in one of the multiple groups of symbols, simultaneously shielding the displayed varying symbols in all of the multiple groups of symbols from the player, except for the displayed varying symbols in the one group of symbols.

Thus, in accordance with each of the independent claims, varying symbols that are to be stopped can be seen by the player, but varying symbols that are not to be stopped (e.g. other simultaneously varying symbols) cannot be seen by the player. It should be understood, that a game prize may be won only after the symbols have been stopped by the player.

With respect to the applied Nishikawa reference, it should be noted that the problem that Nishikawa is directed to solve is to overcome the difficulty in player identifying his/her winning combination of symbols after he/she has stopped all the reels of varying symbols. That is, according to Nishikawa "it is difficult only for what formed the lamp which tells winning a prize near the display like before for winning-a-prize Rhine to express whether a prize was won in which Rhine when winning-a-prize Rhine was complicated" (see 0005 of Nishikawa). Thus, Nishikawa characterizes the purpose of the invention as "a game person can distinguish easily the pattern which

corresponds at the time of winning a prize.”

In Nishikawa, “The liquid crystal panel 33 constitutes the discernment means which can distinguish easily the pattern in which the winning-a-prize pattern was formed”(see 0013 of Nishikawa). And “a game person can distinguish a winning-a-prize condition in an instant”.

Thus, according to Nishikawa, the shielding means works after fixing a winning-a-prize. Indeed, without performing shielding after all the varying symbols have been stopped, Nishikawa would be incapable of accomplishing its stated objective. Thus, any attempted modification Nishikawa’s timing of the shielding would violate a principle of operation of Nishikawa.

The present invention has a different objective and accomplishes its objective in a very different way. More particularly, the purpose of the present invention is to provide a gaming machine that can indicate how a player can operate a game machine, while symbols are varying, in a manner that is advantageous to a player (see page 7 lines 5-10). Thus, in accordance with the present invention, the shielding occurs before all varying symbols have been stopped by the player, and thus also before the player has won-a-prize.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that each of independent claims 1, 5 and 11 patentably distinguishes over the applied prior art. It is therefore respectfully requested that the rejection of these claims over the prior art be reconsidered and withdrawn.

It is further respectfully submitted that other features, such as those recited in claims 12 and 13, further distinguish over the applied prior art.

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In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the application is in condition for allowance and an early indication of the same is courteously solicited. The Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned by telephone at the below listed local telephone number, in order to expedite resolution of any remaining issues and further to expedite passage of the application to issue, if any further comments, questions or suggestions arise in connection with the application.

To the extent necessary, Applicants petition for an extension of time under 37 CFR § 1.136. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to the Deposit Account No. 01-2135 (Case No.1227.43065X00) and please credit any excess fees to such Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,
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